What is claimed is:

1. An image management device, comprising:

an image storage unit which accumulates and stores a plurality of photographic image data sets;

an image receiving unit which receives the plurality of photographic image data sets from customers and stores the plurality of photographic image data sets, along with customer data related to the customers, in a state accessible to the customers;

an image storage expiration determining unit which determines whether to expire from storage the plurality of photographic image data sets accumulated and stored in the image storage unit; and

a storage recording unit which records the plurality of photographic image data sets determined to be expired from storage by the image storage expiration unit onto a storage recording medium which can be returned to the customers.

2. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the image receiving unit determines whether a received photographic image data set, from among the plurality of received photographic image data sets, has been already received before, based on additional information attached to the photographic image data set, and receives only photographic image data sets which have not been received yet.

3. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the image receiving unit transfers and stores the

plurality of received photographic image data sets in the image storage unit through a network.

4. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the image storage expiration determining unit determines storage expiration for each pre-classified photographic image data group.

5. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the storage recording unit records the plurality of photographic image data sets onto the storage recording medium so that associated photographic image data sets can be reproduced, by: associating the plurality of photographic image data sets; designating a representative photographic image data set from among the associated plurality of photographic image data sets; and selecting the representative photographic image data set during reproduction.

6. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the storage recording unit associates and records photographic image data sets and additional information, related to the photographic image data sets, onto the storage recording medium.

7. The image management device according to claim 1, wherein the image storage unit stores the plurality of photographic image data sets, which have been recorded onto the storage recording medium, for a predetermined period of time in a state where the customers cannot access the plurality of photographic image data sets, and thereafter, deletes the

plurality of photographic image data sets from the image storage unit.

8. The image management device according to claim 1, further comprising a printing unit which prints an index print of the plurality of photographic image data sets when the plurality of photographic image data sets are recorded onto the storage recording medium.

9. The image management device according to claim 8, wherein the printing unit includes selecting means for selecting desired photographic image data sets from among the plurality of photographic image data sets recorded onto the storage recording medium, and the index print is created for only the photographic image data sets selected by the selecting means.

10. The image management device according to claim 1, further comprising a checking unit for checking customer data recorded in the storage recording medium against the customer data stored along with the image data sets accumulated in the image storage unit, when additional image data sets are to be recorded into the storage recording medium in which image data sets of a predetermined customer are already stored by the storage recording unit; wherein

the storage recording unit records the image data sets for which the customer data checked by the checking unit match, in the storage recording medium.

11. An image management system which connects user terminals and an image management device through a network, in

which the image management device has an image storage unit which accumulates and stores a plurality of photographic image data sets; an image receiving unit which receives the plurality of photographic image data sets from customers and stores the plurality of photographic image data sets in a state accessible to the customers, along with customer data related to the customers; an image storage expiration determining unit which determines whether to expire from storage the plurality of photographic image data sets accumulated and stored in the image storage unit; and a storage recording unit which records the plurality of photographic image data sets determined to be expired from storage by the image storage expiration unit onto a storage recording medium; wherein

the image storage expiration determining unit includes storage expiration notifying means for notifying the user terminals of storage expiration of the plurality of photographic image data sets, which have been determined to be expired.

12. The image management system according to claim 11, wherein the storage expiration notifying means further notifies the user terminals of customers who have permission to view the plurality of photographic image data sets, of storage expiration of the plurality of image data sets which have been determined to be expired.

13. An image management system as defined in claim 11, wherein the storage recording unit records onto the storage recording medium via a network.

14. An image management system as defined in claim 12, wherein the storage recording unit records onto the storage recording medium via a network.

15. An image management system which connects a plurality of image management devices through a network, in which the image management device has an image storage unit which accumulates and stores a plurality of photographic image data sets; an image receiving unit which receives the plurality of photographic image data sets from customers and stores the plurality of photographic image data sets in a state accessible to the customers, along with customer data related to the customers; an image storage expiration determining unit which determines whether to expire from storage the plurality of photographic image data sets accumulated and stored in the image storage unit; and a storage recording unit which records the plurality of photographic image data sets determined to be expired from storage by the image storage expiration unit onto a storage recording medium; wherein

the plurality of photographic image data sets have attached thereto storage information, which specifies a predetermined storage location of the photographic image data for a digital camera or the customers; and

the image receiving unit transfers the plurality of photographic image data sets to a predetermined image management device according to the storage information of the plurality of received photographic image data sets and stores the plurality of photographic image data sets in the image storage unit of

the image management device.

16. The image management system according to claim 15, wherein:

the image storage expiration determining unit includes storage expiration notifying means for notifying the user terminals of storage expiration of photographic image data sets determined to be expired.

17. The image management system according to claim 16, wherein the storage expiration notifying means further notifies the user terminals of customers who have permission to view the plurality of photographic image data sets, of storage expiration of the plurality of image data sets which have been determined to be expired.

18. The image management system according to claim 16, wherein the storage recording unit records onto the storage recording medium via a network.

19. The image management system according to claim 17, wherein the storage recording unit records onto the storage recording medium via a network.